

Message Text

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S E C R E T MELBOURNE 1526

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, AS

SUBJECT: LEBANESE EDITOR INVITES HAWKE MEET ARAFAT

1. DECEMBER 19 BOB HAWKE, ACTU PRSIDENT, TOLD LABATT HE HAD BEEN VISITED LAST MONTH BY GHASSANI TUENI, EDITOR OF BEIRUT NEWSPAPER AN-NAHAR.

2. WITHOUT REVEALING EXACT AUTHORITY, TUENI SAID HE HAD BEEN ASKED TO INVITE HAWKE TO VISIT CAIRO, ALGIERS AND BEIRUT FOR TALKS WITH SADAT, BOUMEDIENE AND ARAFAT. BUT REAL PURPOSE WAS TO HAVE HAWKE MEET ARAFAT WHO, ACCORDING TO TUENI, IS READY "TO GUARANTEE SEPARATE EXISTENCE OF ISRAEL". IN EXPLANATION TUENI TOLD HAWKE ARAFAT IS RELATIVE MODERATE WITHIN PLO AND WAS THEREFORE FAR FROM EXPRESSING OWN OPINION AT UNITED NATIONS AND THEREAFTER.

3. HAWKE TOLD LABATT HE HAD AT ONCE CONTACTED ISRAELI AMBASSADOR TO CANBERRA, MICHAEL ELIZUR, WHO HAD CABLED HIS GOVERNMENT. ISRAELI REPLY AS YET INCOMPLETE, EXCEPT TO WARN HAWKE ABOUT HIS PERSONAL SAFETY, PARTICULARLY IN BEIRUT. HAWKE SAID HE COULD GO TO MIDDLE EAST IN CONNECTION WITH FEBRUARY MEETING ILO GOVERNING BODY AT GENEVA.

4. HAWKE OF COURSE IS CONCERNED TO DO RIGHT THING AND,

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FAILING COMPLETE ISRAELI GUIDANCE, ASKED LABATT FOR ADVICE.

PLEADING IGNORANCE OF BASIS TO GIVE ADVICE, LABATT ASKED TIME TO THINK ABOUT IT. IN REPLY TO SUGGESTION THAT HE CHECK AUSTRALIAN DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, HAWKE SAID HE DOESN'T AGREE WITH WHITLAM GOVERNMENT'S SO-CALLED "EVEN HANDED" POLICY AND DIDN'T TRUST DFA ON THE QUESTION.

5. COMMENT: LABATT RECALLS FOR DEPARTMENT THAT HAWKE WAS USED ONCE BEFORE BUT BY ISRAELIS TO GIVE MESSAGE TO SOVIETS IN LATE 1973. ALSO IF THIS APPROACH IS GENUINE, THERE SEEMS MORE THAN SO FAR REVEALED, AS ARABS MUST KNOW HAWKE WOULD SEEK ISRAELI ADVICE AND ISRAELIS HAVE NOW GOT ARAFAT MESSAGE. PLEASE ADVISE URGENTLY.
BRAND

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